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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [SNAR](#) [ASEC](#) [UY](#)  
SUBJECT: POROUS BORDERS AND DRUG TRAFFICKING IN URUGUAY

REF: A. STATE 133921  
[1](#)B. MONTEVIDEO 0947

[1](#)1. (SBU) This telegram supplements information provided in reftel B. AmEmbassy Montevideo remains concerned over the future implications of Uruguay's porous borders, unprecedented levels of drug-trafficking, and potential money laundering. The Government of Uruguay (GOU) does not have adequate resources or expertise to combat all of these issues simultaneously. It is imperative that we get ahead of the curve and assist the GOU in its efforts to address these burgeoning problems. In a recent meeting with RSO, the Minister of Interior (Daisy Tourne) lamented the lack of control the GOU has over its borders and the sky-rocketing seizures of illegal drugs in 2007. She has also expressed serious concern over potential money laundering in Uruguay.

[1](#)2. (SBU) The government has scant resources dedicated to border security. This stems from a general lack of resources for security and the fact that transnational crime is a recent phenomenon in Uruguay. The Embassy has planned fact-finding trips to border areas, particularly to the north with Brazil in January 2008 to provide additional on-site reporting. Post also is exploring the establishment of a U.S. Customs and Border Patrol (CBP) Advisor in Uruguay, as suggested in reftel, if a funding mechanism can be found. GoU authorities report that USD 26 million (street value) in illegal drugs were seized in Uruguay in 2007. This is an extremely significant amount of trafficking for this small country. Most of the drugs are/were likely bound for Europe, but once they leave the harbor, their destination could be to any viable market, including the U.S. There was an approximate 100 percent increase in seizures of cocaine and marijuana in 2007, versus 2006. Uruguayan seizure success rates are much lower than in the U.S. and what we are witnessing could be just the tip of the iceberg.

[1](#)3. (SBU) Finally, the much more complex crime of money laundering is of growing concern and the extent of it in Uruguay is difficult to gauge. Uruguay has very strict banking secrecy laws which are conducive to money laundering. It is not just Uruguay's idyllic beaches that seem to make it a favored destination for "retiring" drug lords. As the U.S. and its regional partners manage to successfully put the squeeze on areas such as the nearby tri-border area, it follows that some of this activity will flow to other areas of lesser resistance, such as Uruguay. For this reason,

prior planning and preventive action will pay-off for the U.S. if we can find ways to help Uruguay better control its borders, drug-trafficking and money laundering.  
Harding